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PORT OF SPAIN ALSO FOR DEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [EAGR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KPAO](#) [GY](#)

SUBJECT: INCSR PROMPTS GREATER SCRUTINY OF FOREST
CONCESSIONS

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 278

[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 254

[1](#)1. The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) is taking steps to prevent narco-traffickers from gaining control of timber concessions in Guyana. This is a direct reaction to the 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), which stated that the GFC "granted a State Forestry Exploratory Permit (SFEP) to Aurelius Inc., a company controlled by known drug trafficker Shaheed 'Roger' Khan." After the INCSR's release, Forestry Commissioner James Singh quibbled with this assertion on semantic grounds only.

[1](#)2. The independent Stabroek News reported March 28 that concerns about the lack of due diligence into Aurelius' owners were raised at recent GFC meetings, and that the GFC board has agreed to examine more rigorously the bona fides of future SFEP applicants. A GFC board member has confirmed this to PolOff, adding that the GFC genuinely wants to defend the timber industry from infiltration by narco-interests.

[1](#)3. Guyana's timber industry offers an easy cover situation for narco-criminals, so an ineffective or complicit GFC poses a significant threat. Timber is a capital-intensive business that requires substantial up-front equipment purchases - very convenient for laundering money. The timber concessions are located in remote locations - where owners operate airstrips invisible to the Guyanese authorities as well as freighters full of timber that can be used as cover for drug shipments.

[1](#)4. Comment. A more circumspect GFC is an important development in Guyana's fight against narco-trafficking. Post is encouraged by some Guyanese authorities' fledgling efforts to put pressure on major drug traffickers. End comment.

BULLEN